

critical digest

VOL. IV No. 15

December 10, 1951

The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Openings This Week

The Grand Tour-Martin Beck, 12/10/51. Playwrights Company presents Elmer Rice's new play staged by author. Starring Beatrice Straight and Richard Derr...Lo and Behold!-Booth, 12/12/51. Theatre Guild presents new comedy by John Patrick, directed by Burgess Meredith. Starring Leo G. Carroll and Jeffrey Lynn...Point of No Return-Leland Hayward presents Paul Osborn's new play based on John P. Marquand novel, starring Henry Fonda, directed by H.C.Potter. John Cromwell, Leora Dana and Frank Conroy are featured.

Digests of Current Reviews - More on Page 4

Gigi-Fulton, 11/24/51. Weekly reviewers split on merits of Gilbert Miller's production of Colette's novel, as adapted by Anita Loos. All found production aspects perfect, particularly the outstanding sets, costumes and between act curtains. Only Shipley, New Leader, stayed off critical bandwagon accorded newcomer Audrey Hepburn; but he blamed misdirection for her high power antics. Supporting cast headed by Cathleen Nesbitt, Josephine Brown and Michael Evans rated praise from all. Difference of opinion occurred over merits of script. Cue, Time and New Leader appraisers thought it too trivial and unfunny. They all noted that script and Raymond Rouleau's direction lacked the charm of the between act curtains. Latter were truly French, while former tried to be. Gibbs, New Yorker, rated it as an engaging comedy as we are likely to see for a long time, while Newsweek man billed it as one of the choicest bits of light drama ever served up. Trade paper reviewers Hobe, Variety, and Francis, Billboard, doubt if it will set any commercial records; but recommended it as diverting, enjoyable theatre.

Remains To Be Seen-Morosco, 10/3/51. Lindsay and Crouse comedy doesn't concern Clurman, New Republic, or George Jean Nathan, one way or the other. In filing their mildly "con" reviews each made this clear. Clurman found it a fairly clever farce melodrama, a little cheap and a little obvious. While Nathan billed it as "truck." Only welcome relief from general doldrums, he noted, was fine physical frame of Janis Paige. Shipley, New Leader, praised show lightly; crediting director Bretaigne Windust with building indifferent material into a lively theatrical piece.

Paint Your Wagon-Shubert, 11/12/51. Unusual "pro" review received by Cheryl Crawford's musical by Lerner & Loewe from Krutch, Nation. Critic admits that a few years ago he decided that he had seen as many musicals as he could stand. Most musicals are composed for the innocent in heart who will believe any given fairy tale as long as they assume that legs are a treat, Krutch contends. At any rate he judged current production very pleasant, at least for the innocent.

Out of Town Reviews

New comedy by Mr. and Mrs. George S. Kaufman, Fancy Meeting You Again, judged by its New Haven opening needs plenty of work in latter half, comments Golly, Billboard. First act is rollicking good fun, though direction not up to usual Kaufman standards. Producers Chandler Cowles and Ben Segal plan to open in New York in Jan.

News & Notes

Shows that closed include A Tree Grows in Brooklyn...Lawrence Perry's North American Newspaper Alliance drama columns will appear in Armstrong's "Daily Sports" scratch sheet...Argentina taking over Shaw's royalties.

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' A Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '

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|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. NY Times | 12. Chr.Science Monitor | 23. WCBS Leonard |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune | 13. Journal of Commerce | 24. Commonweal |
| 3. NY News | 14. Morning Telegraph-WFDR | 25. Cue |
| 4. NY Mirror | 15. Ward Morehouse | 26. Nation |
| 5. NY Compass | 16. George Jean Nathan | 27. New Leader-WEVD |
| 6. NY Post | 17. Wall Street Journal | 28. New Republic |
| 7. NY Journal American | 18. Women's Wear | 29. Newsweek |
| 8. NY World Tele-Sun | 19. Billboard | 30. New Yorker |
| 9. Brooklyn Eagle | 20. Variety | 31. Park East |
| 10. LI Press | 21. Critical Digest | 32. Saturday Review |
| 11. Newark News | 22. Theatre Arts | 33. Time |

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-so" means the critic did not state directly if he recommends the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening. Unless otherwise noted critics voted "pro."

AFFAIRS OF STATE-9/25/50

Con: 1-6-9-11-12-15-16-17-18-22-23-24-25-28-29-32.

DAGELS AND YOX-9/12/51

None: 10-14-21-26. So-So: 13.

CALL ME MADAM-10/12/50

Con: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-9-10-15-16-19-20-21-25-27-28.

FAITHFULLY YOURS-10/18/51

None: 12-13-14-17-18-22-23-24-26-29-30-31-32-33.

THE FOURPOSTER-10/24/51

Con: 19-22-26-28. None: 10-14-21-23. So-So: 3.

GIGI-11/24/51

Con: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-12-15-18-20-21-22-25-29-30
None: 13-14-16-17-19-24-26-27-28-31-32. -33.

GLAD TIDINGS-10/11/51

Con: 2-6-15-16-27-30-33.

GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50

None: 14-18-22-24-26-28-29-31-32.

THE KING AND I-3/29/51

Con: 1-4-5-6-8.

THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51

None: 12 thru 17-19 thru 33.

I AM A CAMERA-11/28/51

Con: 1-2-4-5-6-7-15-17-18-19-20-24-25-26-29-30-33.

THE NUMBER-10/30/51

None: 10-12-14-16-21-22-27-28-31-32.

PAINT YOUR WAGON-11/10/51

Con: 26. None: 10-21.

REMAINS TO BE SEEN-10/3/51

Con: 26. None: 10-21-22-24.

SAINT JOAN-10/4/51

Con: 16-22 None: 10-21-26-32.

SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49

Con: 3-5-7. So-So: 1.

STALAG 17-5/8/51

None: 10-12 thru 33.

TOP BANANA-11/1/51

Con: 1-2-4-8-9-17-19-20-21-23-24-25.

TWO ON THE AISLE-7/19/51

None: 10-11-12-16-22-26-27-28-31-32.

Con: 2-6-7-15-20-23.

None: 13-14-17-18-22-24-26-27-28-31-32.

Con: 1-7-16-21-24-26-30-33.

None: 12-13-17-22-27-28.

Con: 2-4-6-15-23-24-32-33.

None: 12-13-14-17-22-25-31.

Con: 33. So-So: 25.

None: 5-9-10-11-21-24-26-27-28.

Con: 4-25-26-27-30. None: 10-21-22. So-So: 3.

Con: 6-7-27. None: 12-16-22-24-26-28-31-32.

Con: 2-3-26. None: 10-12-22-27-28-32.

' Green Room Department '

CONTINUED CAMPAIGNS...7:00 PM curtain once weekly would capture vast audience of suburban theatre fans, insists Morehouse, WT&S; who observes that an audience at 8:00 PM curtain is usually on time, but the audience for an 8:30 PM curtain is never on time..."Expense Account Society" should only be allowed to mark off regular price of tickets on taxes, not the scalpers price suggests Chapman, News, as a sure way to put more seats on the market...Every young player praised would probably rather be in Hollywood than on Broadway, surmises Watts, Post.

NO G.I. SEATS...Servicemen don't expect Broadway theatre managers to go broke giving away all their seats to men in uniform, comments Taylor, WT&S, in surveying week end entertainment situation in NY. But they do wonder why a few seats or a few rows cannot be saved for G.I.s passing through NY.

NEW PLAYS SOUGHT...Broadway producers and playwrights were chided by WNBC Leon Pearson "Critic at Large" for resorting to so many revivals and productions of foreign plays. The broadcaster suggested that American headlines and folkways provided plenty of lively material for new plays if Broadway wasn't so interested in the lightweight.

COLUMN TIPS...Choice seats for musical hits may go as high as \$11 box office price the Sardi set is betting, informs Kilgallen...Those beautiful between act curtains in Gigi were created by Lila de Nobili, discovered Sylvester, News... Gloria Swanson should have settled her differences with Nina management quietly, condemns Sobol.

ON LANDLADIES...English landladies, and maybe American hotel managers, can render the actor on tour or during rehearsal, a real service, points out "Stage" editorial. A warm smile, a warm hearth and a warm bath will do wonders for the tired actor, considerably worse for wear and tear. Playgoers are often indebted to landladies, without knowing it, for the high quality of performances.

ANTA VS CRAFTSMEN...Controversy over presentation of Desire Under the Elms settled with O'Neill's agent recalling the non-professional rights from the latter group. Rice, Post, believes ANTA director, Robert Whitehead, has been sympathetic, reasonable, but understandably firm in his decision to bring the ANTA version to NY on January 16.

AUDIENCE SURVEY...Gilbert Miller's survey of "The Moon Is Blue" audiences, conducted by Arthur Cantor, reports that a tremendous market for those who have the price still exists for the theatre, but is not being exploited. Gelb, Times, report on survey found that people over 55 go to the theatre more often than youngsters probably due to the late curtain time. High prices and difficulty in obtaining tickets were reasons most given for non-attendance. Atkinson, Times, received 29 per cent of votes as favorite critic, with Gibbs, New Yorker, runner up with a low nine per cent. Many misspelled critics names or thought other columnists were drama critics. Survey covered 7000 questionnaires returned from the 64,000 placed in programs.

' Theatre News Round Up '

John McClain, named to succeed Robert Garland as Journal American critic, will drop his thrice weekly essay column...Daily critics didn't cover limited run of "Don Juan in Hell," letting their reviews for one night stand at Carnegie Hall suffice... Anthony Ross replaces Murvyn Vye in The Number, latter signed for Modern Primitive.

' Random Drama Notes '

TV & RADIO---BBC World Theatre series being rebroadcast over WNYC, New York, on Saturdays at 2:00 PM...Billboard reports that Don Juan in Hell unit sought by ABC for weekly radio series...Entire performance of Saint Joan may be televised from Cort stage for closed circuit telecast to out of town theatres...WEVD First Nights, with Joseph T. Shipley, heard this season at 11:30 PM...Peter Pan with Veronica Lake may be televised Christmas day..."Stage Entrance" Earl Wilson's DuMont TV show, expanded to half hour and featuring original scripts by young playwrights...Beth Holland's short wave theatre and fashion show heard over WRUL, Boston, and beamed to South America, drew thousands of entries in contest in which prize is pair of South Pacific tickets...American Theatre Wing and WNEW, New York, readying series featuring excerpts by students from famous American historical plays and musicals.

BOOKS---"Show Biz" now in third printing, with co-author Joe Laurie, Jr. setting records for multiple guest appearances on TV & radio shows...Harper's publishing musical version of A Tree Grows in Brooklyn..."Remains To Be Seen" to be published by Random House...Alan Dent, British critic, preparing for Knopf, a collection of letters between George Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Pat Campbell...Simon & Schuster's "Rodgers and Hart Song Book" sent 32 page reprints of book to disc jockeys for special promotion.

FILMS---"Main Street to Broadway" film will feature sequence with entire first night audience including all of the critics in their usual places...Paramount has bought film rights to Stalag 17...William Saroyan's play The Great Life will be filmed by Bond-Vidor, independent producers...Warner's "Where's Charley?" film made in England, is completed but can't be released for nine months, in order not to clash with possible stage presentation in London...1913 Broadway spectacle Joseph and His Brethren has been bought for films by L.B.Mayer.

DRAMA DESK---Charles Laughton, director and star of First Drama Quartette's Don Juan in Hell, enthralled Drama Desk, theatre reporters monthly luncheon club with "reading" from Thomas Wolfe. Laughton had the idea and the cast for the Shaw production of final act of Man and Superman, but producer Paul Gregory was only one interested in trying it, the actor said. The group played high school auditoriums and gyms for two years before present Broadway appearance. In spite of predictions that "reading" vogue may be widespread, Laughton doubts that many pieces lend themselves to this treatment. Though the cast knows its lines perfectly, the books are used on-stage as legitimate props to remind actors and audience that the spoken word is the thing.

' Digests of Current Reviews '

Nina-Royale, 12/5/51. Daily critics bowed to negative critical judgment expressed by star Gloria Swanson during the Wilson and Tennent production's Philadelphia tryout. She said that her lines in the Samuel Taylor adaptation of Andre Roussin's French play were bad and that Gregory Ratoff's direction was wrong. Majority of newspaper reviewers agreed completely. Only thing the actress didn't predict was that Alan Webb's comedy portrayal and her own gowns would steal the notices. Sole kind words were from Dash, Women's Wear, who filed a frankly "so-so" report. Play had moments of great fun together with leaden periods. Watts, Post, likewise found it frequently entertaining, but the fun remained somewhat sparse. Atkinson, Times, rated production astonishingly bad even for this season. Kern, Herald Tribune, believes Swanson was probably also right in stating that her understudy could do better.

